COMPLETE LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. **(previously amended)** A method for delivering a therapeutic agent into the inner ear of a living subject, said method comprising:

providing a drug delivery unit comprising a carrier material and a therapeutic agent combined therewith, wherein said carrier material provides for controlled release of the therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time; and

inserting said drug delivery unit directly into the round window niche of the subject such that said unit is positioned completely within the round window niche, wherein the therapeutic agent is released from the drug delivery unit, contacts the round window membrane and passes into the inner ear.

2 - 25. **(cancelled)**

26. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said drug delivery unit has a volume of between 0.1 mm^3 and 250 mm^3.

27. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said drug delivery unit is configured as a pellet, disk, tablet, plate, sphere, cube, cylindrical unit, strand, plug, paste, or amorphous mass.

28. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material is capable of delivering the therapeutic agent to the inner ear in nanogram to microgram quantities.

29. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said therapeutic agent is present in a quantity of between about 10 wt% and 40 wt% of the total weight of the drug delivery unit.

30 - 47. **(cancelled)**

48. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein the carrier material is an injectable material.

49. **(previously added)** The method of claim 1 wherein said placing of said drug delivery unit is done by injection.

50. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of 24 hours.

51. **(previously added)** The method of claim 1 wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of hours.

52. **(previously added)** The method of claim 1 wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of months.

53. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises a polymer.

54. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises a polyanhydride material.

55. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises a polyorthoester material.

56. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose.

57. **(previously amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises hydroxyethyl cellulose.

58. (**previously amended**) The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises hydrophilic microspheres.

59. (**previously amended**) The method of claim 1 wherein said carrier material comprises a bioadhesive material.

60. (**previously added**) The method of claim 1 wherein said drug delivery unit is a multiphased composite drug delivery unit.

61 - 62. (**cancelled**)

63. (**previously added**) The method of claim 1 wherein said therapeutic agent is selected from the group consisting of urea, mannitol, sorbitol, glycerol, lidocaine, xylocaine, epinephrine, immunoglobulins, sodium chloride, steroids, heparin, hyaluronidase, aminoglycoside antibiotics, antioxidants, neurotrophins, nerve growth factors, various therapeutic peptides, and polysaccharides.

64. (**previously added**) The method of claim 63 wherein said therapeutic agent is an aminoglycoside antibiotic.

65. (**previously added**) The method of claim 64 wherein said aminoglycoside antibiotic is gentamycin.

66. (**previously added**) The method of claim 1 wherein said release of said therapeutic agent is achieved by osmosis, diffusion, active/passive transport, or a combination thereof.

67. (**previously added**) The method of claim 1, wherein the carrier material is biodegradable.

68. **(previously added)** The method of claim 1, wherein the carrier material is synthetic.

69. **(previously added)** The method of claim 1, wherein the drug delivery unit comprises a soft, semi-soft, or pliable carrier material.

70. **(previously added)** The method of claim 1, wherein release of the therapeutic agent from the drug delivery unit is without inadvertent delivery to other tissue regions outside the round window niche.

71. **(previously added)** A method for delivering a therapeutic agent into the inner ear of a living subject, said method comprising:

providing a drug delivery unit comprising a carrier material and a therapeutic agent combined therewith, wherein said carrier material provides for controlled release of the therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time, and further wherein said drug delivery unit is configured as a pellet, disk, tablet, plate, sphere, cube, cylindrical unit, strand, plug, paste, or amorphous mass; and

inserting said drug delivery unit directly into the round window niche of the subject such that said unit is positioned either partially or completely within the round window niche, wherein the therapeutic agent is released from the drug delivery unit, contacts the round window membrane and passes into the inner ear.

72. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71 wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of 24 hours.

73. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71 wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of hours.

74. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71 wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of months.

75. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71 wherein said carrier material comprises a polymer.

76. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71, wherein the carrier material is biodegradable.

77. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71, wherein the carrier material is synthetic.

78. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71, wherein release of the therapeutic agent is achieved by osmosis, diffusion, active/passive transport, or a combination thereof.

79. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71, wherein the drug delivery unit comprises a soft, semi-soft, or pliable carrier material.

80. **(previously added)** The method of claim 71 wherein said therapeutic agent is selected from the group consisting of urea, mannitol, sorbitol, glycerol, lidocaine, xylocaine, epinephrine, immunoglobulins, sodium chloride, steroids, heparin, hyaluronidase, aminoglycoside antibiotics, antioxidants, neurotrophins, nerve growth factors, various therapeutic peptides, and polysaccharides.

81. **(previously added)** The method of claim 80, wherein the therapeutic agent is an aminoglycoside antibiotic.

82. **(previously added)** The method of claim 81, wherein the aminoglycoside antibiotic is gentamycin.